

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: June 18, 2015 **Meeting No.:** 206

Project: Howard Station **Phase:** Schematic

Location: 300 Howard Street

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Michael Hunter, Partner with the Washington Baltimore Development Company, introduced the project and consultant team assembled. Mr. George Holback, representing Cho Benn Holback Architects, identified the program components of the project. They include 300 multi-family, market rate, rental apartments; 14,000 square feet of ground level retail uses and 300 structured parking spaces. Mr. Holback presented proposed plans, massing and schematic elevations. The project, as described; preserves existing “contributing” buildings and inserts sensitivity scaled and fenestrated in-fill buildings along Howard Street. The design incorporates a residential tower resting on a garage base located on the eastern edge of the site along Tyson Street. The Architect noted that the main residential entry to the project is at the corner of Howard and Mulberry Streets, service is accessed off of Tyson Street and vehicular access to the garage is both from Howard and Tyson Streets. Proposed exterior materials include, masonry, metal and cementitious panels and glass.

COMMENTS OF THE PANEL:

In general, the Panel was pleased with the proposed schematic design direction of the urban in-fill mixed use project. They complemented the Architects on their efforts to preserve existing “contributing resources” along Howard Street and in-fill with new construction sensitive to the scale and character of the existing historic context. The placement of the residential entry at the corner of Howard and Mulberry Streets and the access of service off of Tyson Street were viewed positively.

The “Iconic corner tower”

A majority of the Panel expressed support for the “extension” of the tower to the corner of Howard and Mulberry Street and felt this strong urban design gesture allowed the project to “own the corner”. The extent to which the tower is expressed at the corner raised conflicting responses. Several Panel members felt the continuity of the four to six story Howard Street “street wall” should be honored and that the tower, above this base line, should step back. Other Panel members expressed the desire to promote the prominence of the tower, emphasizing both its verticality and modernity. All agreed that the current proposed approach could stand clarification and a bolder expression of intent.

Roofline and Tower Cap

Panel members encouraged the Architects to vary the roof line and suggested the “iconic” corner tower element could be higher in height. The Panel felt, given the length of the tower, that the cornice treatment or building cap could be visually lighter and varied. There was discussion regarding the continuity of the main building mass above the parking podium and whether the read should be of one mass/height or if there should be more distinction between each of the ‘towers’. Further incorporation of a variety of outdoor living spaces for the units may want to be woven into a varied massing approach and tie to the concept of those already being created within the retained portions of the Howard Street buildings.

Residential Entry Element

The Panel urged the Design Team to restudy the scale and fenestration of the one story “carved out” entry element, and suggested a rethink the creation of that degree of ‘void’ space and that a two story space could be more appropriate given the scale of the tower.

Internal Public Space for Retail Patrons

The Panel expressed concern about the viability of the “shared” interior space for retail patrons. They raised the potential conflict between the need for private and secure access for residential tenants and the proposed semi-public assembly space. The Panel posited that creating “two sided retail” may weaken the intent to re-energize Howard Street retail. The Panel urged the Design Team to consider operation, security and merchandising issues associated with the proposed interior common retail court and to focus the retail activity and expression along Howard Street.

PANEL ACTION:

Recommend approval with comments.

Attending:

George Holback, Steve Schwenk – Cho Benn Holback

Dave McLaren – McLaren Engineering Group

Michael Hunter, Russ Gordon, Brad Beutel – WBDC

Dr. Sahr Bockai – Owner

Maxine Sisserman – Baltimore Studio

Brian Greenan – BDC

Caroline Peri – DpoB

Adam Bednar – The Daily Record

Ms. Ilieva, Messrs. Bowden, Burns*, Haresign and Rubin - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Alex Hoffman, Caitlin Audette – Planning